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ISABEL
AND RINALDO.



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DOBELL COLLECTION

p. 20



Yours ever
Paul Chapman

ISABEL AND RINALDO.

A TRAGEDY.

IN FIVE ACTS.

by
Fred Chapman



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R.M.B., 2 Aug.

TO
WILLIAM CRESWICK, ESQUIRE,
IN TESTIMONY OF ADMIRATION
OF
HIS GENIUS,
THIS TRAGEDY IS, WITH HIS PERMISSION,
RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED,
BY
THE AUTHOR.

Characters.

DUKE.

GENERAL.

LANDOLPHO.

DIONE0.

CONRADO.

MARTELLINO.

RINALDO.

ALBERT.

FATHER AMBROSE.

BRUNO.

ISABELLA.

ALESSANDRA.

CATELLA.

NURSE.

Priests, Soldiers, Citizens, Courtiers, &c

SCENE—*Florence and Lucca.*

PERIOD, A.D. 1342.

ISABEL AND RINALDO.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*A Public Place.*

Enter ALBERT and CONRADO.

ALBERT.

But I tell thee, man, 'tis fixed and certain
That we march to-night; e'en now our General
Is with the Duke, and in an hour at most
'Twill be proclaimed.

CONRADO.

When I am warm in bed
To-night, I'll dream your news is true; awake,
I will not credit it. Believe me, youngster,
There will be no war.

ALBERT.

But the Duke to us
Is pledged to carry out this quarrel. First,
Our General was he appointed; then,
By the people's voice he is made our Duke,
That we might better hope to end this war
Successfully.

CONRADO

Yet still, I'll stake this hand
I prophesy aright.

ALBERT.

It cannot be.

But see here Martellino comes in haste.
Now I do prophesy, this hand too stake,
He proves untrue Conrado's prophesy.

MARTELLINO (*without*).

What, Albert and Conrado.

Enter MARTELLINO.

ALBERT.

Well man, well ?

MARTELLINO.

Why thus commands our General—That you,
That all, be at their posts within the camp
By midnight, and at daybreak be prepared
To march.

CONRADO.

The night together let us break
Till then. I've giv'n my wench these twenty times
A hundred parting smacks, till kissing's grown
As dull as matrimony ; so I'm free
To offer up with you to-night libations
Unto all the fighting gods of Christendom,
To speed our tortoise General on his march.

MARTELLINO.

No, no, Conrado. You must now return
At once with us unto the palace, where
The Duke will hold his Court, and take with us
Your loyal leave.

CONRADO.

To Court! Indeed, not I!

Court talk is Greek to me. I ne'er venture

In a place where it is unmannerly
To call my trusty little linguist here— (*Taps his sword.*)
My world's interpreter—to help me out
In argument, when my rough tongue fails me.
'Sdeath! Who's that that steals away so cat-like
In the dark? There, do you not see the man?

ALBERT.

Methinks it is the miscreant Bruno,
By his thievish gait. Dost know the fellow?

CONRADO.

Know him! Faith, yes. I know him to be
The cunning'st knave that e'er in Venice 'scaped
The hangman's cord. I say, beware of him!
Let him not walk behind you in the dark.
I saw Rinaldo here a few days since,
But look the coward rascal in the face,
And he did show what nimble legs he had,
To save his skin from scratches.

MARTELLINO.

Conrado,

I pray you now that you do come with us.

CONRADO.

Well, well, the courtier then I'll play awhile—
Tell twenty lies to win but half a smile!

[*Exeunt.*]

Enter BRUNO and CATELLA.

CATELLA.

Nay, Bruno, I will not be put off thus;
Thou shalt stay and talk to me.

BRUNO.

Why, woman,
Haunt me thus? and what dost thou out at nights?
Go, get thee home, if honesty's thy trade!

CATELLA.

My mistress, the Lady Isabella,
Bade me out, to know the news that's rumoured,
And now I haste to tell't.

BRUNO,

Haste then, begone,

And stay not me !

CATELLA.

Thou talk'st like this, I know,
To put me off.

BRUNO.

What wouldst thou have with me ?

CATELLA.

Oh ! hast thou not sworn by all things holy,
Thou would'st marry me ?

BRUNO.

Well, admit I have.

CATELLA.

Admit thou hast ! Then why thus put me off ?

BRUNO.

This war prevents. Why, in this war, most like,
I shall be killed, and thou canst couple then,
Good wench, with some lustier fool than I.

CATELLA.

Oh ! Bruno, I beseech thee, talk not so ;
Thou frighten'st me.

BRUNO.

Come, come, good wench, go home ;
Good luck to thee ! Thou see'st I'm in haste.

CATELLA.

Oh, Bruno, Bruno, make me thy wife,
As thou so oft hast promised me thou'dst do,

Ere thou dost leave me for this cruel war.

Oh! were I thy wife, then, when thou art gone,
I'd ever pray for thee.

Oh! were I but thy wife, I'd drudge all day,
All night, how the best to serve thee, Bruno;
Thy very slave I'd be unceasingly,
By word or look I'd never vex thee more,
I'd do whate'er thou bad'st—ah! though the thing
Thou bad'st were wrong. Some money, too, I've stored,
And that I'll freely spend, to make for thee
A home, though poor, yet still a pretty one,
'Gainst thy return; and then, perhaps—a child—(*Weeps.*)

BRUNO.

Well, by and by we'll talk of this. Begone.

[*Exit* CATELLA.]

The devil strangle thee and the brat together,
That's in thy womb, ere I will marry thee.
Marry thee! I would as lief be married
To a churchyard corpse, with all its progeny
Of crawling worms! What pestering fools
These women are! Because we humour them
When their fancy's warm, they must needs serve up
The stale remainder of the meal—invite,
Forsooth, their gossip kinsfolk of the town
Unto a marriage feast, and then fall a-railing,
If we but say we have no further appetite!
With unaccustomed limbs, till now, this Duke
Has been aflound'ring by the shore; to-night,
A skilful swimmer and in midstream plunged,
He breasts the treach'rous waves. Would I had power
To bribe the devil to reveal to me
The fated issue of this gamester's cast.

Day by day, with slow and patient handling,
Hath he drawn here within the camp, the rough
And riotous hearts scattered through the land ;
This done, he packs them off to war and fight
His neighbours, leaving it to chance, to kill
Or cure their griefs. Yes, yes, it is too plain
For doubt ; this man should be an emperor.
Those puzzling, uncouth missives which I bore,
From Lucca here, with such close secrecy.
By him enjoined—aye, as though they had been
Stolen relics of a saint, I can now,
Methinks, as plain interpret and decipher,
As ancient Daniel did in Babylon
The fiery scribbling in Belshazzar's halls.
The cunning of it pleases me. This man's
Both apt and capable to weave a web
Of dextrous villainy. I am drawn
Towards him by a feeling near akin
To brotherly love, which bids me tie
My fortunes unto his. I am resolved,
Let come what may, be it to sink or swim,
The Duke's my master ; I'll plunge after him. [Exit.

SCENE II.—*Audience Chamber in the Duke's Palace.*

Enter GENERAL, DIONEIO, ALESSANDRA, Soldiers, Courtiers
and Attendants.

GENERAL.

Well met, well met. Soon now our slothful limbs,
Benumbed and cramped by this inactive peace,

Shall we restore to healthful life again !

This night doth end our lazy holidays.

Enter MARTELLINO, CONRADO, and ALBERT.

I am glad to see thee, Martellino,

Albert and Conrado too. But our friend

Rinaldo,—where, where is he, Conrado ?

CONRADO.

I have not seen the lad these three hours past.

MARTELLINO.

But now I saw him by the river side.

There, in fondest reverie wrapped, he lay,

Agazing on the stream, as though thereout

He strove to draw his own life's augury,

As one by one the tiny waves, bejewelled

By the silvery moon, leapt prattling on the shore ;

But he did look so sad and pitiful,

When I delivered unto him your summons,

General, I had no discourse with him.

ALESSANDRA.

But dost thou think, my dear Dioneo,

It will be long before thou dost return ?

DIONEΟ.

That question from a soldier's wife ! In truth

I cannot answer questioning so fond

And foolish. This at least I'll promise thee—

That swift as bird to his expectant mate

And hunger-chirping little ones, at eve,

Doth homeward wing his flight, will I, dear wite,

Return to thee, this work of war being done.

CONRADO.

We are bound but for a summer holiday,

Where more will die from surfeit than cold steel,

Before this secret, lady, shall have been
But two weeks old, 'twill be a nine days' wonder;
And so 'tis safe, perhaps, to entrust it
To your keeping.

ALESSANDRA.

I fear Conrado's tongue
Will soon become far sharper than his sword,
If he doth whet it thus with hard stale jests
On me.

Enter DUKE and BRUNO.

DUKE.

Did time allow, each valiant friend, that's here
This night, should have a separate welcome—
Yes, but to most, with an impelled farewell
To follow it. Oh! friends, believe us true,
Had this heart its sway, we'd not be parted thus;
In person would we head your enterprise,
To reap with you this war's proud harvestings.
Crushed must be the thought. Stern duty ties us down
To skulk at home and play the watchman's part
O'er our distracted State, and—poor solace—
At odd scraps and intervals of time to snatch
A little space wherein to shed some brinish drops
Of unavailing tears, when we are told
How you in battle nobly weeping are,
Your life's blood out abroad. Oh, General!
If I were ever envious, 'twould be so now,
To know thou hast the lucky privilege,
Of marshalling forth our gallant troops to war.
I'd lop off this hand if I might rightly dare
Usurp thine office for awhile.

Old battles flash before us, and old scars
And healed wounds begin to prick again,
And hot youth's skirmishings start up afresh,
And rush in maddening riot through our brain.

BRUNO.

[*Aside.*

Oh, most excellent! Why, beside this man
The Roman Roscius were a mountebank!

DUKE.

My brave Dioneo! old friend in arms,
Methinks thy father stands before us now—
That model of a man. God speed thee, friend!

DIONE0.

The father's sword the son shall ne'er dishonour.

DUKE.

For that we'll be your gage. Martellino!

MARTELLINO.

Sire.

DUKE.

Your baby son we'll have rechristened
When this war is o'er, and we will be his sponsor;
And in one little word his name shall speak
His father's bravery.

MARLELLINO.

And if I fall,

The little I deserve, I would freely beg,
May live in memory, to devolve on him.

DUKE.

Conrado, fewest words, we know, with thee
Are best; Is't so? We understand each other?

CONRADO.

I trust so, Sire. Your pardon—yes, vain words
With me are naught.

Enter RINALDO.

DUKE.

Ah! our tardy warrior! Thy hand, thy hand.
Let not thy too hot valour lead thee on
To unregarded danger. Dost thou hear?
Bear this in mind. We do enjoin thee to it.
The coward oftentimes courts danger most;
But a cool head, when the strife is hottest,
Is the true soldier's test. When thou return'st,
We'll have a wedding in our Court. The bride
Shall be adorned with victor's laurels, twined,
With lilies of fair Florence. Wear this, lad,
And think it was thy father gave it thee.
What ails thee, son?

RINALDO (*staggers*).

'Tis naught, 'tis naught, my lord.

[*Trumpet sounds.*]

DUKE.

Gentlemen, farewell! To you, with liberal trust
Your country doth confide the issue of this war;
And that right bravely you'll that trust fulfil,
We do ourselves avouch! No further need
To pause or hesitate; on Lucchese ground
Go, take your stand! and let one glorious battle
End this strife, and seat once more sweet smiling peace
Triumphant in our homes! Do this, return to us,
With bounteous gifts our city shall o'erflow!
And whilst life remains to you, your country's love—
The brave man's noblest recompense—is yours!
And when, in after years, this war's events
Are chronicled, though the blood-red rust of time

May be upon your swords, the deeds they've done
Shall to your children and your children's sons as brightly
As feats achieved within their yesterdays ; [shine,
And as they read the story of our times,
They'll hug with reverence the names they bear,
And all the warrior's pride shall flood their cheeks,
As they narrate exultantly the deeds
Their grandsires wrought!

[*Exeunt all but DUKE and BRUNO.*

Why wear'st upon thy face

That devil's grin ?

BRUNO.

Well, I did think, my lord,

How easy 'tis to lead some two-legged asses
By the nose, with but an empty promise
Of a wisp of straw, filched from our neighbour's barn.

DUKE.

Be silent, knave ! I have a thing to say.

BRUNO.

Speak it, my lord. Thy servant shall obey. [*Exeunt*

SCENE 3.—*A garden adjoining Landolpho's house.*

Enter LANDOLPHO and ISABELLA.

LANDOLPHO.

The air is chilly, Isabel. I'm cold
And weary. Let us within.

ISABELLA.

Yes, dear father,
If you wish. Here, my cloak shall cover thee.

LANDOLPHO.

No, no. I'll rest awhile.

ISABELLA.

Be seated here.

LANDOLPHO.

Not there, not there. To see that crumbling tower,
Doth ever make me sad. It tells me tales
That I would fain forget. Why should it thus
The ground encumber? Sure 'tis left by time,
The world's grim conqueror, as trophy here,
In triumph, but to point in mockery
O'er Landolpho's house.

ISABELLA.

What foolish fancies,

Father.

LANDOLPHO.

Alas! a poor man's fancies, child,
Are ever foolish. Yes! Had gibing fate e'er stript
His golden crown from off the kingly brow
Of Solomon--ah, me! from that time forth
What empty folly from his lips had fall'n!

ISABELLA.

The rudeness of that clown, who crossed our path,
Hath ruffled the. Oh! do not chide me thus.

LANDOLPHO.

Bah! Should such as he, then, ruffle me? No!
'Twas the rainbow livery on his back.
Why, they who were, methinks, but yesterday,
Poor ragged beggars, crouching at our gates
For charity, to-day do buzz abroad,
In painted coats, our Court nobility.
Our Duke hath need of wiser councillors
Than these mechanic lords of yesterday!

Enter CATELLA.

CATELLA.

It is true, my lady, the army quits
The town to-night.

ISABELLA.

Didst thou see Rinaldo?

CATELLA.

I did, my lady. He'll be here anon. [*Exit* CATELLA.]

LANDOLPHO.

Why, why, indeed, did we agree to join
Our fortunes to this boy's? A falling house
Doth need a sturdier prop than this. Yes;
Best seek some better fortune, child. Dost hear?

ISABELLA.

Oh! speak not thus. Each word doth fall a drop
Of poison in mine ears!

LANDOLPHO.

I say, best seek
Some better fortune child.

ISABELLA.

My fortune's linked,
And thou consenting, unto Rinaldo's.

LANDOLPHO.

Thou art a foolish child.

ISABELLA.

No more of this;
For while Rinaldo lives, I'm part of him;
And I myself would dig myself a grave,
And o'er myself would draw the clogged earth,
Wherewith to bury me, if such a thought
Flashed ever for an instant through this brain.

LANDOLPHO.

My foolish child, I did but speak in jest.

ISABELLA.

Oh, forgive me, father!

LANDOLPHO.

'Tis o'er, and lo!

Behold! all smiling as the very morn,

Thy young Apollo's here!

Enter RINALDO.

Indoors, indoors,

Come, Isabel, within.

ISABELLA.

Yes, instantly. [*Exit* LANDOLPHO.]

Oh, dear Rinaldo! I would have thee stay;

And yet I know that it is wrong in me

To do so. Would that I could fill the long

And weary blank, when thou hast gone away,

In dreaming that, beside me, thou wer't here,

As thou art now, and bidding me farewell.

Thou wilt be sure to bear in mind, I know,

What we have told each other. You'll remember

All that I have said.

RINALDO.

Aye, each wish of thine—

And heaven will take the trespass not amiss—

In my memory, as a sacred thing,

Is interwoven with the parting prayer

Of our dear Father Ambrose.

ISABELLA.

I do think,

Although, indeed, I would but have thee sad

At this sad time, thou yet dost speak, Rinaldo,
More sadly than thou ought'st.

RINALDO.

I do confess

My thoughts are troubled, Isabel.

ISABELLA.

What is't

Thou fear'st?

RINALDO.

Indeed, I know not what; yet, still,
The dark foreshadowing to thee, to me,
Of some most evil thing, is o'er my heart
Oh, Isabel! 'tis that which makes me sad.
I strive to laugh the fear away, and lo!
Awhile it vanisheth, and then again
Steals over me, and with forbodings wilder
Of impending ill. Yes; but now I left
The presence of the Duke. They who in chief
Do hold command were there; to each the Duke
Addressed himself; to me he gave this sword,
And with fair words and eloquent, the gift
Accompanied; but as he placed the weapon
In my hand, all suddenly my pulses
Ceased their offices, and then a pang, as though
'T had been a dagger there, struck through my heart.

ISABELLA.

Oh, Rinaldo, dearest! what dost thou mean?
What if mishap befall thee in the war?

RINALDO.

My bliss-expectant soul shall stay without
The gates of Paradise, awaiting till

Thou com'st ; for joy in heaven were a thing
Impossible, unshared by thee !

ISABELLA.

Would now
That I might share with thee thy ev'ry danger,
Be ever by thy side, and be the first
On whom mischance might light ; [*Trumpet sounds.*

RINALDO.

I must away.

ISABELLA.

So soon ! Stay yet a little, little time.
Oh let me with mine eyes drink up, awhile,
A little happiness, that it may serve
My thirstful heart until we meet again. [*Trumpet sounds.*
Oh, cruel sound ! When wilt thou send to me
To tell me thou art well ?

RINALDO.

Each day, each hour,
If such were possible ! Thy father waits ;
His blessing, now, shall join our hearts in one ;
So may I claim thee when this war is done ! [*Exeunt.*

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*A room in Dioneo's house.*

DIONEo asleep, and ALESSANDRA.

ALESSANDRA.

Within this face, a'as ! I read the tale,
The three months' tale, of grief and misery,
Which his reluctant tongue disjointedly
Did tell, ere slumber overpowered him.

Oh! sorrow's creeping o'er all hearts I love,
And life itself, will in a little while,
Be but a charnel-house of faded hopes!
That sigh again! Such sleep can give no rest.
Dioneo! oh, Dioneo! wake!

DIONE0.

I have been dreaming, wife, within this hour,
A century of wrongs. My busy brain
Doth counsel keep in sleep, and multiplies
The damning proofs of treachery--

ALESSANDRA.

Why dost thou pause?

DIONE0.

I'd for a little time forgot myself,
'Tis scarce two hours, methinks, since I returned;
I'd be at home, indeed, with thee to-night,
From each pestering fancy free my brain,
And bar our door against this loathsome world
And all its villainies.

ALESSANDRA.

No questioning

Of mine shall harass thee.

DIONE0.

Hath Conrado

Sent me no messenger?

ALESSANDRA.

He hath not.

Did he not, then, return with thee?

DIONE0.

Alas!

I am constrained, dear wife, against my better will,
To tell to thee the thought which haunts my dreams

And frights my wakeful hours. Rinaldo's dead.
That too well thou knowest.

ALESSANDRA.

Yes, and I have mourned
As for a brother gone. Oh! tell to me,
Dioneo, the sad, sad history.

DIONE0.

Then list. One mournful night, two months gone by,
Rinaldo and myself without the camp
Had strayed. It was a dark and clouded night;
No moon, nor star was visible; and save
The drowsy tread of distant sentinels,
Or whirling beetles' every restless drone,
No sound was heard. And there upon the ground
We laid us down neglectfully, and side
By side, with random talk of home, of thee,
Landolpho, and the fair-haired Isabel,
The dull and creeping time passed slowly by.
Suddenly Rinaldo cried, "I am slain!
Oh, God! some villain here hath murdered me!"
Affrighted sore, I started from the ground,
And stooping o'er Rinaldo where he lay,
Did know these hands were dabbling in the blood
Fast oozing from his breast. He spoke no more.
I sounded the alarm, which scarce I'd done,
When, wounded in the back. I senseless fell.

ALESSANDRA.

And yet all this thou'st kept untold till now!
Alas! what must thou have suffered, and I
Not knowing it.

DIONEIO

Our soldiers soon were there,
As were, too, the enemy's. Confusion
Followed ; but in the end unto my tent
They bore me, but not Rinaldo. The spot
Where he had fall'n was soddened with his blood,
His body ne'er was found ; but still his death
By most was credited, and many tears,
From stern and rugged hearts, did tell the love
They bore towards him.

ALESSANDRA.

What a fearful tale !

I weep afresh as thou dost tell it me.
But dost thou think, indeed, Rinaldo's dead ?

DIONEIO.

I fain would hope that he perchance may live.
On battle-field I've seen a father weep
His son, beside him, lying dead—a brother
Wrapped in stolid misery for a brother
Slain, and friends lamenting o'er friends cut off ;
But ne'er saw I a grief so terrible,
As was Conrado's for Rinaldo's fate.
Friend's, father's, brother's griefs in his seemed joined
In one huge stolid misery, tugging
At his brave heart, as though to rive't asunder.
At length the thought that his Rinaldo yet
Might live, did streak, with feeble light, his dark
Despondent heart ; and now with that alone
To cheer him on his way, doth he pursue
A chance-directed journey o'er the land,
To know the end of this foul villainy.

ALESSANDRA.

Poor Isabel ! How can I tell thee this ?

DIONEIO.

How bore she his death ?

ALESSANDRA.

As one death struck herself,
She fell upon the ground. Three days and nights
She senseless lay, whilst o'er her death and life
An equal contest held for mastery.
I watched beside her. 'Twas a piteous sight
To see. There her father stood, now peering
Anxiously at those open fix'd eyes
That knew him not, to see if life were still
Within ; and now, with trembling hands, beating
'Gainst his breast, and with mutterings confused,
Or broken prayers or curses on his head,
For that he had killed his child. But she did live,
And reason, too, came feebly wand'ring back
To its grief-shattered home. But oh ! how sad
A change was there. In northern climes, 'tis said,
All living things the dayless winter through,
Bechilled by Boreas' icy breath,
Lie senseless and as seeming dead—e'en so,
Heart-numbed, spell-bound by grief, did now appear
The lovely Isabel. Listless she moved
From place to place : Did as her father bade :
Ah ! had he said—Yield now thy life to me,
She'd have done it willingly without sigh
Or murmur ; and in such sad mood as this,
Landolpho urging it, was she transferred
To be the bride of our fantastic Duke !

DIONEIO.

Married to the Duke ?

ALESSANDRA.

Ah ! she is now his wife,

If such a frozen piece of earth of right

Can bear that name.

DIONEIO.

Alas ! poor Isabel !

ALESSANDRA.

Poor Isabel, indeed ! 'Twould make thee weep,

Dioneio, did'st thou behold her now.

She seldom speaks, and when she does do so,

Her voice, so gentle once, sounds loud and harsh.

A sorrowing smile is ever on her lips,

Whilst her vacant eyes seem praying for a tear,

The fount of grief being dry, their dying thirst

To quench ! Oh ! in the palace, oftentimes,

As I have looked upon her, seated there,

So pale, so sad, so mute and motionless,

I have thought, alas ! this is not Isabel,

But a poor picture of a lonely heart,

Starving on a golden couch !

DIONEIO.

No more of this, I pray thee, love, to-night.

Soon shall this deed so darksome, see the light ! [*Exeunt*

SCENE II.—*Interior of a Cottage.*

RINALDO.

How is't Pietro hath not yet returned ?

Each lagging moment seems a lifelong day ;

And as a shiv'ring criminal I wait,
Uncertain if my doom be life or death !
Oh, Isabel, my love ! but send to me
One little word as a restorative.
Say thou art well—'twill serve to make me whole,
More quickly far, than all the healing salves,
These two months poured, to my fresh-healed wounds.
Nurse, I say, good nurse !

Enter NURSE.

My lad Pietro

Doth not return. To-night I leave thee, nurse.
Thou must not take it as a fault in me
I stay not here until thy son's return.
To him, to thee, I know I owe my life ;
I must remain thy debtor for awhile.
How I can requite thy care I know not.
At least take these ; I would there had been more.

NURSE.

Take these from thee ! No, no, indeed, not I.
My good man's resting in his grave in peace ;
He'd not have taken these, were he alive,
And I'll not take them either. Beneath this hearth
I have four bright new florins hid,
And they will serve, when I am dead, to buy me
Decent burial. No, I want not these.

RINALDO.

How old art thou ?

NURSE.

I shall be seventy

When next Shrovetide's here.

RINALDO.

O happy ignorance
Of this sinful world ! 'Tis a thing most strange.

Recorded let it be in history !

To live so long, yet have an honest heart !

[*Knock at the door.*]

NURSE.

Who's that who knocks ?

CONRADO (*without*).

A man, atired and weary.

RINALDO.

God ! I should know that voice, though all the world

Were speaking in a breath ! Conrado ! oh !

Conrado !

[*Opens door.*]

Enter CONRADO.

Thou livest ! Thank God ! thank God !

Fool ! fool ! I cannot stay these water drops.

[*Exit* NURSE.]

RINALDO.

How was't, Conrado, that thou found'st me here ?

CONRADO.

I have been searching for thee, lad, these many,

Many days. 'Twas chance alone that guided me.

How was it that thy life hath thus been saved ?

RINALDO.

An honest man, a Lucchese soldier, here,

Nigh dead, did bear me. Here have I been nursed

And tended until now ; and here I've lived

Concealed, for fear of hidden treachery.

The wretch who dealt the blow which he had thought

My death, did hiss into mine ear, " The Duke

It is who guidest thus his Bruno's hand."

Oh, Conrado ! my love, my Isabel,

Most like doth now believe me to be dead.

Ah! this moment that I'm standing here,
May she, perhaps, all overwhelmed with grief,
Be pouring forth her wasteful tears in mourning
For my death. I sent to her Pietro;
He returns not. Here I'll no longer stay.
Though death be certain in my venturing home,
'Twere better far to die beholding her,
Than lingering here, in mad perplexity,
From day to day, away from her I love.

CONRADO.

Thou must not leave this place. Vile treachery
Doth stalk abroad, and rules alone our State.
I'll to Florence and see thy Isabel,
And return to thee with joyful tidings.

RINALDO.

Vain solace to a wretched exile from his love.
Thou canst not appease the cravings of a starving man
With idle tales of rich men's feasts—make glad
The blind, with fancied paintings of the glorious sun—
Turn hell to heaven, by hymning Paradise
Unto one that's damned!

Enter NURSE.

NURSE.

Thy boy Pietro,
Signior, or these dim eyes deceive me,
With sluggard steps is creeping up the path
That leads unto our cot.

RINALDO.

Art sure 'tis so?

Yes, yes, 'tis he! Now Heaven send good news!
What! ho! Pietro! Quick! Oh, quicker, lad!

How tortoise slow he drags his steps along !

Come, boy, come !

Enter PIETRO. (He falls exhausted.)

NURSE.

Good heavens ! the boy is dead !

CONRADO.

No, no, he doth but faint from weariness.

Get thee some water, dame.

RINALDO.

This doth presage,

Alas ! some evil tidings unto me.

NURSE.

How ragged and how travel-stained ! Poor boy !

His heart, too, how slow it beats ! There, there, there,

Chafe thee that hand ! His eyes are opening.

His shoes are cut and torn, and his bare feet

Are bleeding through. Art hungry, my poor boy ?

PIETRO.

Oh, Catella !

NURSE.

Who is that he calls ?

RINALDO.

His sister, the Lady Isabella's maid.

PIETRO.

Oh, master, master ! She's dead ! She's dead !

I heard her death-cry as I entered here.

RINALDO.

Dead !

CONRADO.

Who is't that's dead ? Speak, boy ! Who is't !

What is't you mean ?

PIETRO.

Oh! I left her dying—
Yes, left her, left her, all alone to die!

CONRADO.

Who? Catella!

PIETRO.

Yes, my poor sister, sir.

CONRADO.

What? Rinaldo, man, stand not thus amazed;
Thy Isabel doth live.

RINALDO.

What dost thou say?

CONRADO.

She lives, man! lives! Catella 'tis that's dead.

RINALDO.

She lives, indeed! I thank thee, Heaven, for this.
Did'st give the Lady Isabel my letters, boy?
Did'st see her?

PIETRO.

Catella prayed me not;
And she did tell me, too, how she did know
The Duke and Bruno 'twas contrived thy death.

RINALDO.

But the Lady Isabel, what of her?

PIETRO.

All thought thee dead; and when a month had passed,
The Lady Isabel was married to the Duke.

Enter NURSE, and then exits with PIETRO.

RINALDO.

Married! Married! Did the boy say married?

CONRADO.

He did, Rinaldo.

RINALDO.

Ah ! and to the Duke ?

CONRADO.

'Twas so, indeed.

Ah, married to the Duke !

Then truth was ne'er a habitant of earth,

And heaven itself doth lie ! Vile world,

I'm quit of you, and thus am free !

CONRADO.

No, no, [*Snatching away dagger.*]

Rinaldo, when thy time shall come to die,

I'd have thee bravely face thy God in heaven,

And not now, with this thief's picklock ope life's door

And sneak thee down to hell !

RINALDO.

Thou heartless man ! Thou dost not know the grief

That's crushing me within. My hell is here—

Yes, here whilst I live must I henceforth endure

The torments of the damned ; and each fresh moment

That I draw breath, a hundredfold and more

Doth multiply my pains ! Wouldst have live,

Within a book to write a chronicle

Of broken vows, and then at last to die,

Worn out with age, with still my task half done ?

Thou foolish doctor, what cruel care was thine ;

Oh, I would fee thee now

With all the buried treasure of this earth,

If thou would'st but unheal my healed wounds,

And let this poor vitality bleed forth afresh !

CONRADO.

Can this be he I once did count so brave !

Is this, indeed, Rinaldo ? It cannot be !

A villain to Rinaldo gives a blow,
And then with treachery doth steal away
Rinaldo's wife; and lo! Rinoldo turns,
With whimpering howl, as a poor base cur
From a roguish hound no bigger than himself,
That steals away his breakfast bone. Oh, who
In Florence would believe it if 'twere told,
"Coward" and "Rinaldo" were coupled in a breath?

RINALDO.

This to me, Conrado?

CONRADO.

Ah boy, and more,
If thou dost act like this. Art thou a soldier
And a man? The Duke hath shed thy blood;
Then blood for blood, I say! The Duke hath stolen
Thy mistress from thee, and I cry, revenge!
Repay with usury these debts thou ow'st,
An then, and not till then, a whining minstrel turn,
And on mawkish ballads blubber forth thy chronicle of woes!

RINALDO.

Thy words are bitter physic unto me.
Well, then, to Florence!

CONRADO.

Ah! and hundreds there,
Have scores to settle with thine enemy.
Yes, he hath wronged us all and all befooled alike—
Turned us into very puppets in a show—
Cried war and victory in our foolish ears—
Sent us a fool-in-April's journeying
Abroad, that he at leisure, undisturbed,
Might forge the chains wherewith to grace our limbs

When we return. To Florence then, at once.
In secret let us go together. Come!

RINALDO.

I am content. Be it to live or die,
It matters not, this Duke will I defy!

SCENE III.—*Room in the Duke's Palace.*

Enter LANDOLPHO and ATTENDANT.

LANDOLPHO.

But I would see the Lady Isabel;
A father begs that he may see his child.

ATTENDANT.

A sudden pain is so tormenting her,
To-day, indeed, thou can'st not, Signior.

LANDOLPHO.

What ails the girl?

ATTENDANT.

Alas! I cannot tell.

LANDOLPHO.

Thou gav'st the flowers?

ATTENDANT.

Yes; and as I did so,
She sadly said—"Like me, they soon will die."

LANDOLPHO.

And the pearls, what then?

ATTENDANT.

I placed round her;
She did chide me for it; removed them instantly;
And, as her tears, pent-up, till now, o'erflowed her woe—
She cried, in saddest accents of despair— [paled cheeks.
"Oh! father! father! thus I pay their price!"

And then, a long, long sigh of misery
Came quivering from her heart, so mournful,
So profound, it seemed, well nigh, a death-dirge utterance !

LANDOLPHO.

Tho may'st retire.

I humbly take my leave.

[*Exit* ATTENDANT.]

LANDOLPHO.

Why should the girl be ever grieving thus ?
Hath she not all that women reckon on
To make her life a sunshine holiday ?
Yes, at one short bound she hath reached the gaol
Which her envious sex would willingly
Have made their lifelong task to gain. With skill
Have I contriv'd this ; and now, forsooth,—
The base ingrate must her excuses forge,
As though I were a tiresome creditor
Soliciting his dues, to keep me thus,
Her father, from her doors. She's like none else !
She, who should be now a very Juno,
Radiant in her pride, doth fret and grieve
As though cold friendless poverty were still
Tormenting us. And yet, a pang at times
Steals o'er my heart as I behold the girl.
I cannot bear to meet those eyes of hers ;—
They gleam upon me with the like sad look
Her mother's wore the moment ere she died,
As though they were reproaching me. But this
Is an old man's weakness. What's done is done ;
And what is done, yes, yes, I know, is right.

[*Exit.*]

SCENE IV.—*Another room in the Palace.*ISABELLA *seated.* Two ATTENDANTS.

FIRST ATTENDANT.

Our Lady, sure, with some strange trance is stricken ;
She hath not moved or spoke, methinks, this hour.

SECOND ATTENDANT.

Shall I now speak to her ?

FIRST ATTENDANT.

I pray you do.

SECOND ATTENDANT.

My Lady !

FIRST ATTENDANT.

Oh, she hears you not !

SECOND ATTENDANT.

My Lady !

ISABELLA.

Didst't thou speak ?

FIRST ATTENDANT.

Shall I sing or play to thee,
My Lady, but to while away the time ?

ISABELLA.

What is't thou say'st, my girl ?

FIRST ATTENDANT.

Shall I now play

To thee, my Lady ?

ISABELLA.

Play ! No, girl, no !

Ye are tired in watching here. Leave me, girls ;
Leave me, leave me !—yes, I would be alone.

[*Exeunt* ATTENDANTS.]

Father, we have done a deed, a wicked deed,
'Fore God and man ! Yes, I am now awake.

I see it all. Had'st thou no pity, father?
So soon! so soon! When I was steeped so deep
In misery, that every sense was dead,
Oh! was it then a father's part in thee,
To do by me as thou hast done? No interval
Of time accorded me, to think, when I
Had power, that I might give my poor denial
To the binding up of this unhallowed compact?
My cup of misery can ne'er be drained!
Drop by drop, each moment of each ling'ring day,
Doth conscience as a torturing fiend replenish it!
My sole sad comfort as the hours creep by,
To know that I am drawn a little, little nearer to the end!
Oh! friendly death! thou fickle sojourner!
Why, oh why did'st thou but loiter here
Beside my fevered bed, then turn aside
To be instead the dreaded visitant
Of happy homes, and leave me friendless here,
Where I do stay, alone, to welcome thee?
Retrace once more thy steps! Come unto me,
And I within thy cold embrace would smile,
As joyously as ere an infant smiled,
When hushed to slumber in its mother's arms!

Enter DUKE.

DUKE.

[*Aside.*

Of such a prize let Jove be envious,
And beauty's goddess pale with jealousy,
Outrivalled thus! Why should I still delay
To taste of the delicious fruit that I have filched
So wantonly, and, like a dainty epicure,
Thus dally with fruition? Isabel,

My wife, I pray thee cast aside awhile
These sad distempered fancies of thy brain.
This grief doth cast its shadow on us all,
And ev'ry sigh escaping from thy breast
Doth find its echo in all hearts around.
Oh! shed on us, we beg, some little gleam
Of joy! We would bind close our people now
With greetings full of love and household welcomings;
Be thou the light to cheer our friendly Court,
And not the mournful shadow of our State!

ISABELLA.

I am thy wife—thy most obedient wife.

DUKE.

Obedient, Isabel! Speak not so.
I do not claim of thee obedience:
I fain would win thy love.

ISABELLA.

My love; Oh God! [*Aside.*]

DUKE.

I say thy love!

ISABELLA.

It is not in my gift,
My Lord. Alas! thou might'st as vainly bid
The glowworm change with his faint feeble light
Night's darkness into day, as to solicit me
To draw from out this wasted heart the love
Thou'dst have me give! But pardon me, my Lord,
Thou must not take amiss what I have said;
What's possible I'll do.

DUKE.

And dost thou think
That sorrow is the heritage of thee

Alone? Oh, no; it is a thing which all must bear,
And princes most of all. Ah yes, indeed,
If they who most do envy us, could read
Our thoughts aright, their vexed hearts would turn
From kingly courts to covet in their stead
The beggar's heritage of thriftless mirth.

ISABELLA.

Most true—alas! most true, most true. Ah me,
I fain would beg of thee that thou wilt suffer me
To dwell awhile alone with mine own griefs,
As I have done till now. Oh! let me yet
Have some days still to commune with myself.
Alone! Alone! Alone!—yes, still alone
Awhile!

DUKE.

Then, Isabel, my wife, farewell!
And oh! may angels cheer thy rest this night!

[*Exit* DUKE.]

ISABELLA.

Rinaldo, art thou waiting yet for me?
I soon must die! But, oh! to flee from thee!

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*Council Chamber in the Palace.*

DUKE, GENERAL, LANDOLPHO, and others.

DUKE.

Signior Landolpho, thy counsel's wise,
And we ourselves, but more especially
Our State, whose safety we do hold far dearer
Than ourselves, do owe thee much, in having thus,
By mere suggestion, brought with our view

These secret plottings, newly springing up
To life against our rule such noisome weeds.
If they are left unchecked, may grow apace,
And ripen to a bloody harvest-field
Of treason 'gainst the State. But thou hast spoke
Thy thoughts, as yet, in halting phrase, as though
Thou fear'st to give full utterance to what
Thou rightly know'st. Speak out thy thoughts ! Fear not !
We do absolve thee from all consequence,
In speaking plainly unto us the blunt
And saucy grumblings of our Town.
Half truths are lies which honest cowards tell ;
And such in times like these, are treason 'gainst the State !

LANDOLPHO.

Alas ! I fear, my Lord, the discontent
Is general. 'Tis said—that untried men
Usurp each place and office in the State ;
And that this peace with Lucca lately made,
Is a betrayal of our country's cause ;
The merchants whine that taxes are imposed,
By means till now unheard of ; and that loans
Are oft extorted by unlawful threats
Of baser wrongs ; of laws and usages
But made to serve as cruel instruments
Of wanton cruelty. Such things as these.—
I beg you pardon me,—are overheard
By day and night in e'ery public place ;
Not secretly, but loudly talked by all :
Each gossip, as he stands beside his shop,
Speaks openly to his next neighbour thus,
As tho' he would but kill the idle time,
In canvassing aloud the morning's news.

DUKE.

The discontented hounds ! Had they been but scourged,
Befittingly they would now be fawning,
Whimpering at our feet ! They shall have cause,
Henceforth, for muttering and for fear, indeed !
How stand our troops towards us, General ?

GENERAL.

Give me but the means wherewith to satisfy
Their pay now due to them, and add to that,
Some trifling recompense wherewith to wash
From out their foolish brains, the memory
Of the sudden ending of this war, and then,—
Until their pockets need replenishing,—
For a month, at least, I'll answer for them.
Some few men there are, of note, whose names
Are written here, whom I hold dangerous ;
And these need careful watching.

DUKE.

Be it, then,

The care of each of you to watch all signs of danger.
If ye hear more, unto us instantly
Report thyselfes ; and so our council's o'er.
Good morrow, gentlemen !

LANDOLPHO.

Farewell, my Lord.

[*Exeunt all but DUKE and GENERAL.*]

DUKE.

The drivelling fool ! We must add to these
A name or two. Stay, General ! Be back
Within an hour ! And we will then devise
How best to act.

[*Exit GENERAL.*]

Bruno ! Bruno ! I say !

Enter BRUNO.

BRUNO.

I am here, my Lord.

DUKE.

Thou'lt find here written,
The names of those that I would have thee watch.
Report to us their doings of each day.
Art sure thy men are trusty, Bruno ?

BRUNO.

Yes, my Lord,

As men with cords around their necks can be,
Whom I alone can save from hanging. Yes,
I can safely trust them all.

DUKE.

At once

Away !

BRUNO.

Amongst the names here writ, my Lord,
I do not see our General's,

DUKE.

Fear nought.

He's safely bound to us. His hands have clutched
Of Lucchese gold too much, that we should fear
Of him. Away !

[*Exit BRUNO.*

This knave is worth them all !

[*Exit DUKE.*

SCENE II.—*Apartment in the Palace.*

ISABELLA.

Enter ATTENDANT.

ATTENDANT.

The Lady Alessandra doth desire
To speak with thee, my Lady.

ISABELLA.

Thou may'st bid
The Lady Alessandra unto me.

[*Exit ATTENDANT.*]*Enter ALESSANDRA.*

Alessandra, dearest, thou art welcome. [together !]
What ! What is this ? In tears ! Would that could weep

ALESSANDRA.

Oh my dearest Isabel,
Poor Catella's dead !

ISABELLA.

Dead ! Oh, happy girl !
How I do envy her !

ALESSANDRA.

Yes, she is dead.

But oh ! 'tis not for her I weep !

ISABELLA.

What now ?

ALESSANDRA.

Last night I visited Martellino's wife :
Returning thence, near midnight, as I reached
My home, an aged crone, crouched by the door,
Shrieked forth :—" There's one hard by, before she dies,
" Would speak to thee. I have waited long ; Quick !
" Follow me !" With that, she clutched me by the arm,
And half beseeching, half enforcing me,

Let me, my attendant following,
To a loathsome lane, hard by the prison-house ;
There, in a hovel, lit dully by a flickering torch,
Hard fighting 'gainst the wind, the dank cold earth
And some mouldering straw, her only bed,
And stretched by her side, a child, new-born, naked,
Dead, a dying woman lay !
At first she did not speak, but looked on me
With death's brief-lust'ring eyes ; how long, I know not.
At last, of a sudden, she sat erect,
And propped against the wall, she then hoarsely
Whispered forth—" You do not know Catella.
" I am she. Swear to me that you will give
" My lady, what I now give you." And then,
With her gaunt hand, did she stretch feebly forth
A crucifix, which as she bade, I kissed,
And swore to what she asked. With that she placed
This paper in my hand, and gasping, said,
" Go tell my lady, I, when dying, gave it you,
" And as I hope for mercy from above,
" All here that's writ is true. Now leave me quick !"
And then a wild delirium seized her.
I left the place, and as I did do so,
Half-uttered curses 'gainst one Bruno,
Rattling in the woman's throat, appalled mine ears.
Some two hours afterwards, the wretched creature died !
Now must thou nerve thy heart to hear a thing,
To gladden, yet I fear, to torture thee.

ISABELLA.

Oh, nought that thou can'st tell to me, can bring
Or joy or grief !

ALESSANDRA.

But list ! as I read this :

[*She reads paper.*

“ Bruno’s tale was false. The Duke and Bruno both
“ contrived the plot. It was the Duke urged Bruno
“ on to take Rinaldo’s life. Landolpho knew that
“ Bruno’s tale was false. Chance alone prevented
“ it. Rinaldo is not dead.” [*Isabella falls senseless.*

That “not dead ” hath killed her ! Isabella !
Speak ! How foolish was’t, to tell her thus !
Had I best cry for help ? No ! no ! She moves !

ISABELLA.

What was’t I heard ? Thou told’st me something !

ALESSANDRA.

Rinaldo lives ! Rinaldo lives, indeed !
I know that this is true !

ISABELLA.

Lives ! I seem myself
New risen from the grave, hearing these blessed words !
I breathe once more ! Rinaldo lives indeed !

ALESSANDRA.

He does ! He does !

ISABELLA.

Thank God ! Thank God ! Thank God !
Where—where is he ?

ALESSANDRA.

Near Lucca, we do think.

ISABELLA.

’Tis passed ! ’tis passed ! Oh wretched life farewell !
I’ll seek me out a grave—an unknown grave,
Afar, where thy upbraiding eyes, Rinaldo,

Can never, never look in mine ! Oh God !
They told me thou wert dead, Rinaldo !
Rinaldo ! Rinaldo ! Oh, Rinaldo !

ALESSANDRA.

Those tears will comfort thee.

ISABELLA.

Let's see ! Let's see !

[She takes paper from Alessandra and reads.]

"Landolpho knew that Bruno's tale was false."

My father knew that Bruno's tale was false !

My father knew't ! Oh my God ! Marian !

Oh Marian ! here !

Enter ATTENDANT.

Bid my father here !

Quick ! Quick ! Begone ! Make haste, I say !

[Exit ATTENDANT.

ALESSANDRA.

Oh hear me, hear me, dearest Isabel !

ISABELLA.

Peace ! Peace awhile !

Enter LANDOLPHO.

Leave us together ! Quick ;

[Exit ALESSANDRA.

Oh father, father, in heaven's name say,

That these things are not true !

LANDOLPHO.

What things, my child ?

ISABELLA.

Thou did'st have me wed, this man, the Duke,

My husband, knowing that Rinaldo lived ?

LANDOLPHO.

Be calm, and hear me.

ISABELLA.

Calm ! I'st true or false ?
Speak, " Yes !" or " No !" for I am going mad !

LANDOLPHO.

Be seated here and listen.

ISABELLA.

Good heavens !

'Tis true ! 'Tis true ! 'Tis true !

LANDOLPHO.

My dearest child—

ISABELLA.

I'm not thy child ; I rather would believe
My mother, in heaven, had been false to thee,
Than that thou, my father, had a heart so base
As thus deceive thy child !
Rinaldo ! Oh Rinaldo ! Come to me !
Avenge this cursed plot !

LANDOLPHO.

Be silent, child.

ISABELLA.

Silent ! I'll silent be no more ! No ! no !
I will proclaim my wrongs, both day and night,
Unceasingly, ah ! in the public streets,
That all that have one grain of pity in their hearts
May hear, and hearing, loathe thy wickedness,
And cry out shame upon thee as they cross
Thy path ; oh ! I will tell this thing to all,
Until the very vilest of our kind
Shall learn to loathe a trick so infamous,
And raise their vengeful arms in mutiny
Against this cut-throat Duke

Enter ATTENDANT.

ATTENDANT.

The Duke, my lady, desires thy presence.

ISABELLA.

Go tell the Duke that I desire his presence here !

Dost thou hear ? Away ! and do my bidding !

Exit ATTENDANT.

LANDOLPHO.

Oh ! dearest Isabel, let not passion thus
O'ermaster thee ; what is done, cannot now
Be remedied ; the Duke would have it so ;
We could not but obey, for life or death
Doth rest with him. Oh ! thou art the noblest
In our State and all—

ISABELLA.

I prithee, Signior, do not talk to me ;
Thy tongue doth wag in vain ; thy lips, I see,
Do move ; mine ears do catch some empty sound,
But what thy words import, I know not ; my wrongs
Are far too great thy musty logic of the world
To chew. Your atheist proves there is not God !
Rinaldo lives ! and lo ! your wordy saws
Straight vanish into air, as imps of darkness do,
At break of day !

LANDOLPHO.

Oh Isabel ! my child !

Thy father's life—thine own ; ah, yes, indeed,
Rinaldo's too—if yet Rinaldo lives—
Hang but on a thread, which a word from thee
May sever ! On my knees I beg of thee,
To pause in this wild utterance 'gainst the Duke !

ISABELLA.

He comes ! He comes ! He stands before us now !
The princely bungler at th' assassin's trade !

DUKE.

What means this tone, thus lacking of respect ?

ISABELLA.

Respect ! Respect ! I ne'er was taught to shew
Respect for villains, or to call devils
But by their proper names ! I know full well,
Thou hast the power to kill ; but whilst I've life,
The world shall know the monster that thou art !
For lo ! Rinaldo's self hath risen from the grave,
With twenty several gashes on his breast,
Poor open-mouthed and bleeding witnesses
To tell the world the murderer that thou art !

DUKE.

What meanest thou ? What wild words are these ?

ISABELLA.

Touch me not ! Oh God ! that murderous hand
Would send my life's blood spluttering from my heart,
As burning faggots would a martyr's at the stake !

DUKE.

How beautiful she looks, as thus she raves ! [*Aside.*]
Can Bruno have deceived us ? Can this boy,
The young Rinaldo, be alive, indeed ?
Perchance it may be so. Let her rage on,
This storm of words will soon, per force, be spent !

ISABELLA.

'Tis told in Holy Writ, how once heaven's wrath
Did strike a perjurer dead ; and never yet,
Since man did dwell on earth, was crime so great as this !

And yet this monster lives! This loathsome marriage,
By fraud contrived—with perjury sealed—
With dying groans of murdered men polluting it,
'Fore God and man is void, and thus do I dissolve it!

[*Throws down ring and coronet and exit.*]

DUKE.

Signior Landolpho, we confide her
To thy keeping. Let her be closely watched.
It were not for her safety, nor our own,
That these disjointed follies should be noised abroad.
Keep safe! or thine own life shall answer for't!

[*Exit* LANDOLPHO.]

Enter GENERAL.

How now General? What's the news abroad?

GENERAL.

'Tis time, my Lord, to act. Fresh dangers rise;
Or they who now, in darkness only plot,
Will shortly shew their treasons to the day!

DUKE.

If they will have it so, we say—amen!
To-morrow's morn must shew the world aright,
The work of blood, in mercy done, to-night!

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE III.—*A Room in a Citizen's House.*

Enter DIONEIO, CONRADO, ALBERT, CITIZENS, &c.

CONRADO.

I tell thee no, Dioneio, each hour
That we stand here, see-sawing in debate,
Adds a whole year unto the tyrant's power!
Our wavering troops are ripe for mutiny;

To-morrow, who can tell what change may come!
I say to-night! Yes, give thee but the word,
And I will have five hundred swords at work,
And half our business done, before the moon is up!

ALBERT.

Conrado speaks my mind. Our citizens
But wait for leadership! Let but Dioneo cry
“Up! citizens, to arms for liberty!”
And, quick as beacon fire, the words will fly,
And bring around us in an hour at most,
A thousand citizens and more, well armed.

MARTELLINO.

And I, too, say—let’s strike the blow at once.
The Duke hath now his purse well filled with Lucchese
And that’s a poison, which, if he hath time [gold,
To minister aright, will paralyze
The arms of many who’d fight for us to-night.

DIONEEO.

To-night, so be it then! Thou, Conrado,
Bring up our soldiers to the market place—
Martellino, see that the bell of Santa Crocé’s rung
At the appointed hour! Rinaldo leads
The palace troops. He should be here by now.
What noise is that?

[*Swords clashing below.*

[*CONRADO opens window.*

CONRADO.

The lad himself, methinks!

Yes, ’tis he! ’tis he! There are three men, too,
That press upon him, and a woman’s form
Is stretched upon the ground and clinging unto him,
As if for help. Well parried lad! Again,
Well parried too! Let’s down and lend him aid!

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE IV.—*Street before Citizen's house.*RINALDO and ISABELLA, LANDOLPHO, BRUNO and *Soldiers.**Enter from House* CONRADO, *followed by* DIONEIO,MARTELLINO, ALBERT and *others.*

CONRADO.

Hold! Hold! I say! So it is best! What means
This mad encounter here? Rinaldo too!

RINALDO.

Yes, and I would crave thy help, Conrado,
To save the Lady Isabella here
From these vile ruffians.

DIONEIO and *others.*

What the Duchess!

The Lady Isabella!

BRUNO

[*to Soldier.*

Follow them

Till I return, and then we will enmesh them all
In one brave draught at once.

[*Exit* BRUNO.

ISABELLA.

Oh Rinaldo!

RINALDO.

Fear nought, my Lady. Thou art safe from harm.

DIONEIO.

Conduct Her Grace, the Duchess, to the palace
Good Conrado.

ISABELLA.

To the palace, sayst thou!

Oh no! not there! I flee from thence!

Flee from the Duke, the man that was my husband.

Oh I pray unto ye all to find me out
Some secret, safe abode, far, far away
From yonder dreadful place. The tainted air
Within the Palace, teems with whispering horrors,
And voices—whether from heaven or hell, I know not,
Do speak to me of strange and direful means.
Wherewith to cleanse the earth of all my wrongs
And their foul Minister! Oh lead me, lead me
To the Church's Sanctuary; oh there, 'tis said,
That devils themselves dare not commit their trespasses.
Good Father Ambrose there—God's holy priest—
Will shelter me! Rinaldo, by the love
Thou once did'st bear me, lead me, lead me there!

RINALDO.

I will do so, lady.

LANDOLPHO.

Oh Isabel!
Have pity on thy old father! Hear me!
Return, return with me, if thou would'st save
Thy father's life!

ISABELLA.

Old man, I know thee not!

DIONEO.

Conduct Her Grace, Rinaldo, then, at once
Unto the holy Sanctuary,
And there confide Her Grace unto the care
Of our good Father Ambrose. So lead on!
To Santa Crocé!

Enter BRUNO and SOLDIERS.

BRUNO.

Down upon them all!

CONRADO.

Dar'st thou show here once more thy felon face?
Come on, I say!

RINALDO.

What oh! for Santa Crocé!

BRUNO.

Seize, seize upon them all, alive or dead!
Down with them all!

RINALDO.

Santa Crocé! Santa Crocé!

[*Exeunt fighting.*]

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—*The Sanctuary of the Church.*

ISABELLA, RINALDO (*wounded*), *Priests and others.*

Enter FATHER AMBROSE.

FATHER AMBROSE.

The clash of arms, the shouts of combatants,
And cries, alas! as though of wounded men,
Still, still, in the far distance do I hear!
And these men fight and cut each others' throats,
And yet are styled in Christendom good Christian men!
Oh heavenly Father wilt thou suffer yet,
These things to be within a Christian land!
Weep not thus, my daughter, but place thy trust
In heaven alone! Thou must not suffer
Thy thoughts to dwell too earnestly on things of earth,
Nor let thy heart too fondly cling to one,
Whom now 'twere sinful in thee to hold dear.

Poor erring soul, I pity thee! Alas!
Thou hast been foully wronged! nor could I hope,
'Mid this sad scene, that thou would'st have the power
To cleanse thy bosom of its wrath and bitterness
Against the instruments who have caused thy grief;
But time will heal thy bruised heart and day by day
Will sweet religion pour its healing balm
Upon thy troubled soul and bring to thee
The only happiness which frail mortality
Can know on earth!

ISABELLA.

The pallor, now, of death hath passed away,
And life once more sits ruddy on his lips!
I do not think this wound is dangerous.
Let but this dreadful night be passed, dear Father,
Rinaldo safe, and then, all earthly things
I'll banish from this brain, and thou shalt tutor me
In all godlike ways. I am too troubled now
To list thy words aright.

FATHER AMBROSE.

To-morrow daughter

We will find for thee a tranquil refuge
From this vain world and all its fruitless cares
Within the Convent of Saint Catherine.

ISABELLA.

Thanks, Holy Father, thanks.

RINALDO.

Isabel, that cup!

ISABELLA.

I am here. Thy wound, how fares it with thee?

RINALDO.

'Tis nought. Come nearer unto me. Thy hand!

ISABELLA.

No, no, it cannot be! I must away!
'Tis torture to me now to hear thy voice!
Oh, Heaven, pardon me! Keep still, keep still!
Poor sinful heart, keep still! Oh do not speak so gently!

RINALDO.

I know, alas! thy piteous story!
Yes, Isabel! and all the misery
Thou hast endured. Who can tell the fortune
Of this night. Death is stalking in our midst,
And I may be amongst his fated guests,
Before to-morrow's morn. Let this then seal,
Dear Isabel, forgiveness for what's passed. [Kiss.

ISABELLA.

It is too much! Fool! Fool! God help me!

FATHER AMBROSE.

Oh! with pity now look down, sweet Heaven,
On these poor erring souls!

Enter PRIEST *and* PIETRO.

What tidings now?

PRIEST.

'Tis said that Martellino hath been slain—
That still Conrado, in the market place,
Doth make his stand, but half his comrades slain.
Some twenty arm'd men and more, in haste,
With Bruno at their head, are marching here,
And it is feared that they'll attack this place.

FATHER AMBROSE.

Let the gates be barred! Fear not, my children!
The Church's holy walls will shelter ye.

There hath been civil strife and bloodshed oft
Within our town, in times gone by, but ne'er
Did desperate man, with murderous hand,
Within this holy sanctuary dare to trespass!

[*Knocking without.*

BRUNO—(*Without.*)

Good Father, ope the door! The Duke commands
The delivery unto us at once
Of Her Grace the Lady Isabella.
So Father Ambrose, quick, and ope the door!
Dost hear? It is the Duke's command!

FATHER AMBROSE.

The Duke

Is not my Lord! I am God's servant only,
And this my Master's mansion!
At no man's bidding will I ope the door!

BRUNO.

Then we must smoke thee from thy hole. What, ho!
The torches there!

FATHER AMBROSE.

Retire within our Church,
My children. There we'll offer up our prayers,
That Heaven may shelter us in this our need.

[*Exeunt all but FATHER AMBROSE and PRIEST.*

If thou can'st escape from hence, unseen—
Thou may'st perhaps contrive it yet—
By the Church's postern gate—fly thee with this,
Thou know'st to whom thou should'st deliver it—
The lives of all may hang upon thy speed!

[*Exeunt severally.*

SCENE II.—*Room in Palace.**Enter DUKE.*

DUKE.

I did not think, forsooth, this pensive wench
Had such a merry devil in her soul.
Plague upon her! The wagging of her tongue
Hath done me more mischief in this strife
Than twenty of their swords! Should I hate her?
No! I've had her here till now, a beauteous prize
To please my fantasy, and she shall be
My pliant plaything yet, whilst still her beauty's on her!

Enter BRUNO.

What, hast thou not brought back our fugitive?

BRUNO.

The priests refused us entrance to the church,
Or to the Sanctuary, or to deliver up
Their inmates. We strove to force our entrance;
Whilst doing this, a swarm of citizens,
Well armed, attacked us, and, outnumbered far,
We were compelled at length to leave the place.
I've sent fresh troops to make th' attack anew;
The priests urge on the people to revolt;
In countless numbers do they fill the streets;
The Lady Isabella and Rinaldo's names
I hear repeated now by each man's tongue:
Yes, and as the rabble's rallying cry,
"Isabel and Rinaldo," rends the air!

DUKE.

We must in person see to this. Get thee
My breastplate, and—this sword's too light for use.

So, that's well. 'Sdeath, from Adam's time till now
Men's every danger sprang from woman's foolery.
Quick, to the courtyard summon thee, at once,
Our guard and officers !

[*Exeunt severally.*]

SCENE III.—*Interior of Church.*

FATHER AMBROSE, ISABELLA, RINALDO, PIETRO, *Priests and others.*

(*Noise without and then shouts.*)

FATHER AMBROSE.

Not in vain our prayers ! Aid comes at last !
Phillippo, see thee if these men without,
Are they indeed in whom we trust for help,
If so, unbar the doors.

Exit PHILIPPO.

Oh heaven grant
That this unholy strife may now be stayed !

Enter Citizens armed, with them BRUNO disguised.

FATHER AMBROSE.

For this relief we thank ye, friends.

FIRST CITIZEN.

Good Father,

Whilst we have life, will we defend this place
From outrage.

SECOND CITIZEN.

Here for thirty years from thee
Have we been taught what's dearer than our lives,
And here, will take our stand and willingly
Yield up our lives to shield our Church or thee
From harm.

CITIZENS, *together*.

Yes, with our lives we'll shelter thee !

RINALDO.

I can no longer stay inactive here.
One half our number will suffice to hold
Our Church in safety. Outnumbered by the foe,
Conrado holds his desperate stand ! No,
He shall not fall unsuccoured ! Oh this wound,—
The part assigned to me this night undone,—
Perchance hath ruined all !

[*Trumpet sounds, BRUNO unbars door.*

Enter DUKE and followers.

FATHER AMBROSE.

What treachery is this ?

ISABELLA.

Rinaldo, save me ! Save me from this man !

[*ISABELLA and RINALDO stand together by the altar, Priests surround them. FATHER AMBROSE stands in front with a cross in his hand.*

DUKE.

Friends ! good evening all, and unto thee
Especially, our saintly Father Ambrose.

FATHER AMBROSE.

What means this sacrilege, thou impious man ?

DUKE.

Gently, Sir Priest, we've not come here this night
To bandy words of fire with thee, and so
Let not thy passion thus o'ermaster thee.
We have sent to thee our trusty officer,
Demanding that you make deliverance
Of this fair lady here ; our wife, the Duchess ;

With discourteous words thou greet'st our messenger,
Defy our power and dar'st refuse to us
Entrance to the Church's sanctuary.
What! speak'st thou to us of sacrilege!
'Tis thou, base man, I tell to thee, 'tis thou
Whose presence here pollutes this holy place!
Yes, thou impious Priest, that holdeth here,
As thou dost say, commission from on High
This temple to preserve in purity,
'Tis thou that now art basely suffering it,
Oh sacrilege most vile! to be a stew
Wherein th' adulteress unblushingly,
Doth greet her paramour, and 'fore the gaze—
The common gaze of every vulgar clown,
Parades her crime, making a public show
Of her dishonour, ah and of our own!

RINALDO.

Hold off thy hands! Thou shalt not breathe on earth
These lies from hell!

(Priests stay RINALDO from attacking the DUKE.)

ISABELLA.

Oh Heavens! Holy Father,
I must speak or silent shall I fall down dead!
Within this Church, before the altar where,
From childhood until now I've offered up
My prayers, here, before this holy man,
Heaven's holy priest, 'fore Heaven itself,
Before whose everlasting throne I soon
Must stand, I swear before ye all, before my God,
This man doth lie!

DUKE.

A woman's tongue ever waxeth loudest
The lower she doth sink in crime !
What maddening drugs have ye administered,
Vile priests of Baal, that the devil thus
Possesses her ? Seize upon the woman
And her vile minion instantly ! I'll brook
No more delay !

[DUKE and soldiers advance towards the altar.

FATHER AMBROSE.

Back, ye impious men !

The Lady and the Signior here, are mine,
Consign'd to my care ; the trust I hold
Is sacred ; let no one dare profane it !
For their safe keeping am I accountable
To the Most High, and with life will I
Fulfil my trust, protect and shield them !
Back ! back ! I say ! if ye indeed do hold
Your everlasting souls of worth ! Back ! back !
Or excommunicate shall be ye all !
Accursed of God, abhorred and loathed of men,
The wrath of heaven, here and hereafter,
On your souls ! Hence ! Hence ! If ye advance,
Ah it must be by piercing first this breast !
Strike here, and with that blow the curse of heaven
Alight, upon ye all !

DUKE.

Give place ! Give place !

Thou foolish man ! Give place !

FATHER AMBROSE.

No, no, I say !

By heaven ! I will not !

DUKE

Take then the death

Thou court'st!

[*Stabs him.*]

FATHER AMBROSE.

I go unto my Lord and Saviour!

[*Dies.*]

[RINALDO tries to attack the Duke, but falls from weakness.
Citizens and Soldiers fight. Citizens are at length driven out. Priests surround the body of FATHER AMBROSE.

DUKE.

Thy husband waits for thee, my Lady Isabel!

[*Enter Messenger with letter.*]

Martellino's fled! So then our labour's o'er,
Merrily, gentlemen, will we now sup together!

ACT V.SCENE I.—*Prison and Palace.*

RINALDO.

And thus this sorry game of life's played out,
And o'er my grave, within a little hour,
This cozeners counts his gains! Be it so;
I am content. What now were life to me,
But one sad, sorrowing, starless night,
No ray of hope illumining! But oh!
Isabel—will heaven indeed allow't?
Consigned to gasp a captive life away,
'Mid the polluted air of this foul murderer's den!
Oh God! must I, when wakened unto endless life—

Through all the dread futurity of time—
Through all the æons of eternity,
Have this dire thought, a ceaseless misery
An everlasting horror there, to gnaw upon my heart?

Enter SOLDIER.

Thy downcast eyes, friend, have already told
Thy untold message unto me. Is't so?
I am to die?

SOLDIER.

Signior, the truth is told!

RINALDO.

And when?

SOLDIER.

This night! Within an hour!

RINALDO.

Within an hour I'll be in readiness,
To take my journey hence!
Had'st thou, not I, to play this final scene,
In life's poor fitful tragedy, thou might'st, perhaps,
With freer heart, enact thy part,
Did'st thou but surely know, thy latest word,
When death's dark curtained pall is drawn o'er all,
Would reach that dear and only one, who'd shed
A tear of sorrow o'er thy turf green-bed.
If thou can'st have it so, let me then sleep
Beside Conrado, where he takes his rest;
And when within my cold and careless grave I'm laid,
Have you there writ these words for epitaph:
"I wait thy coming!"

SOLDIER.

This to do, I swear,

Upon this soldier's cross, my father kissed,
In battle as he died!

[*Kissing sword hilt.*]

RINALDO.

And give you, this,
Unto the Lady Isabel. [Gives packet.]

SOLDIER.

I will!

RINALDO.

I thank thee, friend. Now leave me for awhile.
[Exit Soldier.]

Oh Father Ambrose, if thy sainted soul,
Doth linger yet on earth, oh now come unto me,
And we will pray together!

[Scene closes.]

SCENE II.—*Room in Palace.*

ISABELLA.

Death! Death! The mournful wind,
Methinks, moans forth the word, and solemnly
From Santa Crocé's tower, 'tis syllabled,
As the hours die out! The forms, the ghastly forms,
Of those before me, slain this night, seem now
Around me hovering, and with uplifted arms
To motion me to join their dismal crew!
No way but this to 'scape my soul's pollution.
From heaven is the mandate brought to me!
Yes! Yes! These precious drops were sent to me,
To free me from all stain of earth! Marian!
[Produces viol of poison.]

Enter ATTENDANT.

These men without, do they yet guard the doors?

ATTENDANT.

They do, my Lady.

ISABELLA.

To their chief I'd speak.

[*Exit* ATTENDANT.]

Could prayers, could tears avail, these stubborn knees
I yet would bend in supplication
For Rinaldo's life ! Oh ! of what avail
To do't ? As well entreat the forest snake
T' unloose his deadly coil ; the sea-wolf gape
His horrid jaws to set his victim free,
As speak of pity to this murtherous man !

Enter GUARD.

When is this work of blood to be ? This night ?

GUARD.

E'en now, my Lady, in the Court below,
The guard for its sad task is mustering.

ISABELLA.

It is the Duke's command I do not quit
This place ?

GUARD.

Such, my Lady, are the Duke's commands.

ISABELLA.

I'd see the Duke : conduct me unto him !

GUARD.

The Duke is now within the banquet hall,
There, with his officers, he holds his feast.

ISABELLA.

Then I will join him there. I've that to say
Which doth concern him nearly, and to him
I must at once impart.

GUARD.

I'll conduct thee

To his presence.

ISABELLA.

I'll be without anon.

Thou may'st retire.

[*Exit* GUARD.]

No, not companionless
Must thou journey hence, Rinaldo! Together
Will we travel on our way! I'll not pause
Or ponder here, lest irresolute thoughts
Should creep within this heart, and drench with fear
My better purposes!

Enter LANDOLPHO.

LANDOLPHO.

Oh Isabel,
My child, list my words, I beg of thee!

ISABELLA.

What need of words wherewith to prick me now!
The silence of the grave were fitter for this time,
When hell doth violate night's holy armistice,
Drenching thus, with innocent blood, the ground
On which we tread! The devil and his crew
Here hold that feast, the headsman their cupbearer!
Oh! I have seen this night the deaths of many;
The life's blood both of young and aged men
Doth rankly steam within my nostrils still;
And I do think these things, which perplexed fancy
In my whirling brain each moment re-enacts,
May steal me from my sorrow too. So father,
Let me, e'en now, whilst life remaineth here,
Have thee to know that Isabel forgives
In thee all things now past. Remember this,

That if by chance it haps this sorry life
Should cease, and thou art left without me here,
No word that I have idly spoke this night,
May harrass thee! Father, farewell, till we shall meet
[again !

LANDOLPHO.

Farewell! and may untroubled sleep, my child,
Refresh thy soul this night. [Exit LANDOLPHO.

ISABELLA.

Amen! Amen! to that!

Rinaldo! I am ready!

[Opens door.

Now lead me to the Duke! [To Soldier without.
[Exit.

SCENE III.—*Banquet Hall in Palace.*

DUKE, LANDOLPHO, *Officers and others.*

DUKE.

So now our toils being o'er, we will our State
Awhile surrender, and with careless hearts,
As fellow soldiers, we will end the night
In merriment. Let us then drink our thanks
To our fair Florence's safety!

. ALL.

Unto our Duke,
Long life, and to our fair Florence's safety!

DUKE.

With forgèd tears, with halting utterance, [Aside.
And trashy talk of pity on my tongue,

I'll mask, as yet, my sterner purposes.
We thank you, friends, and yet though we do feel
In joyous mood with you surrounding us,
Sad thoughts, unsummoned, rise to mar our joys.
Alas ! these men, whom we, to-night, have sent
To their account, were yet our subjects once,
And for their loss we grieve !

OFFICER.

Think not of them,
My Lord. Their fate had been our own, had'st thou
With pitying folly stayed our arms.

DUKE.

With voice unanimous, ye have adjudged
That young Rinaldo's life is forfeited,
And we, as is most just, by you are swayed ;
We would have spared that life. Heaven knows,
We once did love him as our son. Oh God,
That it were safe to act with mercy—yes,—
And banish him alone our State !

2ND OFFICER.

In doing so
You risk a hundred lives, perchance as fair
As his, and new conspiracies afresh will rise
To prove the cruelty of compassion now !

DUKE.

What thou dost say we sadly know is truth,
But wish, alas, it were not !

Enter MESSENGER.

Speak, man, speak !

MESSENGER.

These men without the northern gate, my Lord,
Again are gathering. The General
Hath sent me unto thee to tell thee this.

DUKE.

But doth he need our aid ?

MESSENGER.

I but bear to thee
This message to excuse his absense here.

DUKE.

Thou may'st retire.

[*Exit Messenger.*]

Now by the Gods, indeed .

Our anger is aroused ! Whilst yet our lips
Had words of gentle mercy half pronounced,
This news is brought. To speak of mercy now,
As ye have said, were madness of a fool !
The sword, alone, of justice must be drawn
To-night. Yes, this traitor now within our power
Must be at once despatched, that we the speedier
Stop this new-fanned fray, and I do charge thee
That thou see'st this done. But stay, before dies,
We'd have the man before us. Lead him hither.

[*Exit Soldier.*]

Oh that this heart were stone, that we aside
Might unheeded cast the pitying prayers
Assailing us within. It must not be !
Alas, alas, this man must surely die !

Enter RINALDO, guarded.

If yet thou wilt confess thy guilt, retract

The falsehoods manifold, which thou hast dared
To utter 'gainst our person and our State—

RINALDO.

I was bid forth to die. I am prepared ;
But I would die with an unruffled soul,
No devil, such as thou, to scare my thoughts
From heaven. With thee I will speak no word !

DUKE.

Dar'st thou confront us thus !

RINALDO.

Lead on at once !

Enter ISABELLA, unobserved.

She pours poison into a cup.

ISABELLA.

I hear, my Lord, that thou hast bid this man
To take a long, long journey hence.
I've come to join with thee in bidding him
Farewell. I do confess to many things
By me, this night, committed. What is past
Be passed away from thought. It was not right,
My Lord, in thee to keep thy wife away
From thy festivities ! But let me thus
This wine-cup drain and drink the victor's cause !

[She drinks.]

Now would I take my last farewell on earth
Of this poor man.

DUKE.

Take then thy wish. Be brief !

ISABELLA.

Drink of this, as I have done, Rinaldo,
If thou would'st scape thy death from this vile man,
And take that death with me !

RINALDO.

Unlooked-for joy !

This cup of happiness to have from thee !

[He drinks.]

ISABELLA.

Thou hast spoken truth. Yes, thy death is in't !

DUKE.

Isabel, my wife, thou must now retire.

ISABELLA.

Peace ! Peace ! I say, abhorred monster. Peace !

I am no wife to thee !

[She falls.]

Out of my sight !

I have no time to curse thee ere I die,

Heaven will do't !

Enter SOLDIER.

Soldier.

Fly, fly my Lord ! The Palace is assailed !

Our General's slain. Thy soldiers all have fled—

Bruno, who should have warned thee of this hap,

Was by the rabble seized and piece-meal torn !

Fly ! fly ! my Lord, at once !

DUKE.

Has't come to this !

Lead then to where the rout is thickest,

That we may carve our way from out this place,

And with the bodies of the slain we'll build us steps

To tread our flight in safety !

[Exit DUKE and soldiers.]

ISABELLA.

Dost thou forgive me now, Rinaldo ?

RINALDO.

This little space of bliss blots out the past
From memory ! Oh now, within these arms—
Oh joy too great for earth—I'll bear thee safe to Heaven !

Enter CONRADO, MARTELLINO, PIETRO, *and others.*

Oh, Conrado, I had thought thou hadst been heralded
To peace before me ! Oh, farewell ! Now death
Steals over me ! The doors are opening !
How fares it with thee ?

ISABELLA.

I am very happy !

Father !

LANDOLPHO.

I am here, my child !

ISABELLA.

Forgive me, father !

Rinaldo ! press thy lips to mine ! 'Tis cold !
'Tis very cold ! Thy hand ! Thy hand ! That's well !
Now love let's on together !



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